

The Instant Mastery of *Kitab Kuning* with Al-Bidayah Method; Between *Kiai* Fractured Authority and *Pesantren* Tradition Preservation

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Received February 28, 2024, Accepted December 16, 2024

Abstract

This research discusses the *kitab kuning* learning method in Islamic boarding schools called the Al-Bidayah method and how this approach is narrated as the antithesis of the *bandongan* approach tradition that has been established in *pesantren*. In *pesantren*, *bandongan* is considered by observers as a method that inherits the culture of rigid social class relations in Islamic boarding schools, especially between *kiai*, *santri* and society as a social group that is the object of the *kiai's* preaching. This is due to the basic character of *bandongan* which is designed to create an exclusive distance between the three social groups above. Meanwhile, the Al-Bidayah method has an inclusive basic character and with its mixture of the great traditions of *pesantren* and pop-culture typical of the younger generation, it can instantly break down rigid social divisions and classes. To discuss the social phenomena, this research uses Pierre Felix Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and habitus. The results of this research state that the Al-Bidayah method uses an inter-directional learning and meaning model so that the students' abilities are more dynamic. The Al-Bidayah method also emphasizes discursive learning patterns with the language of instruction being translated from Arabic, but using Indonesian, so the researcher concludes that this approach is a form of desacralization of *nahwu-sharaf* which has been a special science in *pesantren* into a discipline that can be consumed and discussed. This approach also breaks down the chain of cultural reproduction of the *bandongan* tradition which emphasizes one-way learning and relies entirely on the authority of the *kiai* as the merely source of information and source of truth so that students who learn using this method will then, after returning to preaching in society, be able to become social agents. in creating close relations between *kiai*, *santri* and the community.

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Keywords: *Al-Bidayah, Kitab Kuning, Fraktur Otoritas, Contestation, Authority*

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren in Indonesia have an established tradition of learning *kitab kuning*. This was formed along with the establishment of *pesantren* as an important incubation in the transmission of Islamic teachings in Indonesia.¹ *Sorogan* and *bandongan* are one of the ancient methods in learning *kitab kuning*. As Dhofier stated, learning *kitab kuning* using the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods is a fundamental element of a study institution changing its status to *pesantren*, even though there are no regulations governing it.²

Pesantren apart from being an important incubation for the spread and teaching of the Islamic religion, are also the most important basis for Islamic religious scientific authority because it is from these *pesantren* that *ulama* and religious leaders are born, start their work, spread their influence and charisma in society and are usually characterized by their leadership in *pesantren*, and are supported by *kyai* and students.³ *Kiai's* authority is indeed similar to charismatic authority in Max Weber's theory, the charismatic authority attached to an individual does not come from certain institutions or knowledge but is based on the followers' belief in the strength they possess, whether physical or mental supernatural.⁴

In the context of Javanese Islamic culture, the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods are related to the reproduction process of *Kiai* along with their charisma and authority in society as a medium for *Kiai* preaching. *Sorogan* and *bandongan* indeed require total obedience from students in the learning process. One's mastery of *kitab kuning* from a *bandongan* perspective relies on a competent understanding of Arabic linguistics. There is no discussion time in studying *kitab kuning*. *Kiai* is the main source of authority for truth,

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¹Zulmuqim, Z. (2017). The Existence of Pesantren, Kiai and Kitab Kuning learning as the Main Element of Islamic Education in Indonesia. *Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1(2), 113–134. <https://doi.org/10.24036/kjie.v1i2.9>

²Pondok, masjid, santri, teaching of classical Islamic books (using the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods), and *kiai* are the five basic elements of the *pesantren* tradition. This means that a study institution that has developed to have these five basic elements changes its status to an *pesantren*. See Zamakhsyarie Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren, Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 79.

³Fazlur Rahman, "Internet and Kyais in Indonesia: Negotiation of Authority in a Mediatized Environment", *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*. Vol. 9. 2015.

⁴Jan Wim Buisman, Marjek Derks & Peter Raedets (Ed), *Episcopacy, Authority and Gender: Aspects of Religious Leadership in Europe*, (Leiden: Koninklijke, 2015).

as well as the meaning or interpretation of texts based on scientific knowledge and the relationship between teachers and students from generation to generation. This learning model has contributed greatly to the formation of a rigid Javanese Islamic tradition between *pesantren*, *Kiai* and society so that the relationships that are built between these three elements are as seen in social relations or relations in society between classes, the merely difference is that the Javanese Islamic tradition is determined by religious authority and authority not on capital ownership.

The development of a modern and market-oriented societal landscape has also had an influence on the traditional structure of *pesantren*. In some cases, there are certain concessions which then require a new approach in studying *kitab kuning*. The Al-Bidayah method is one of *kitab kuning* learning approaches that makes learning in the *pesantren* tradition in Indonesia diverse. Different from *bandongan* and *sorogan*, Al-Bidayah does not rely entirely on *kiai* but on a process that was built together between students and *kiai*. The learning approach using this method tends to be more inclusive and democratic.

Everyone has the right to convey their ideas during the process of interpreting books because all students have the same opportunity to interpret the books they study independently, of course this is after going through strict learning prerequisites. *Kiai* in the context of learning using the Al-Bidayah method are merely facilitators who provide validation of various views and options of meaning. This is the uniqueness of the Al-Bidayah Method compared to the two previous approaches.

Based on the background above, there are three basic questions to be studied in this research. First, how does the Al-Bidayah Method in learning *kitab kuning* in Islamic boarding schools become a methodological step in the context of desacralizing the discipline of *nahwu-sharf* which has been an important science in Islamic boarding schools? Second, how is the process of socio-cultural reproduction in learning *kitab kuning* in *pesantren* recreated using the Al-Bidayah Method? Third, how is the Al-Bidayah method in learning *kitab kuning* in *pesantren* structured and deconstructing the established *bandongan* method in learning *kitab kuning* in order to reproduce the authority of *Kiai* in *pesantren*?

METHOD

To answer the research questions above, this research uses a library research approach by exploring theoretical and conceptual debates regarding *kitab kuning* learning approach, *Kiai* authority and how social

reproduction in Islamic boarding schools takes place and is deconstructed by modern *kitab kuning* learning approaches. The study in this research begins by explaining how social reproduction in *pesantren* through learning *kitab kuning* using the *bandongan* method,⁵ then continues with the *kiai's* discourse of authority which is built through this approach. The study continues with the fracture of social Islamic authority where the role of *Kiai* is maintained by the function of *pesantren* as a medium for social and cultural reproduction.⁶ The data in this study were analyzed by presenting Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical sketch of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu's social approach is considered appropriate in order to reveal the social facts of the formation of *kiai's* religious authority through the construction of *kitab kuning* learning in *pesantren*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pierre Bourdieu, Habitus and Arena

In general, Bourdieu offers three new models of ideas regarding social relations and individuals in cultural society⁷ first, the idea of habitus which successfully overcomes the problems of the dichotomy of agent-social structure, individual-society and freedom-determinism. The concept of habitus provides enlightenment and a solution to the dead end of the Marxist approach⁸ which merely focuses on the relations of social classes in the space of economic production and capitalism.

Second, Bourdieu attempts to leave the confines of the concept of relations which is solely capitalistic towards dismantling the mechanisms and strategies of domination in the space of cultural society because domination is not always built by external relations but is also caused by internal actions in the form of habitus which consists of the past, the future, present, future and social environment and cultural factors.

Third, Bourdieu managed to leave of economic determination and capital production theory to explain the logical structure of social actors' praxis and relate it to conflictual and sometimes unequal arenas. Various aspects of complex community life such as culture, art, education, social background, social class, religion, economics, gender, politics, he managed

⁵Kharis Fadhillah. "Manajemen Mutu Pendidikan Islam Di Pesantren (Studi Di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor)". At-Ta'dib 10 (1) 2016. <https://doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v10i1.333>.

⁶ Lexy J Moleong, *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2010). 36; See also: S Nasution, *Research Method (Scientific Research)* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2011). 27.

⁷M. Grenfell (Ed), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, (Durham: Acumen, 2010). See also M. Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Education and Training*, (London: Continuum, 2007).

⁸Arizal Mutahir, *Intelektual Kolektif Pierre Bourdieu*, (Bantul: Kreasi Wacana, 2011)

to structure into models of domination practices that exist in society which are not easy to recognize because they are behind the concepts of euphemism and mystification of both the self and the communal collective.

According to Bourdieu, habitus is defined as property and social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) which consist of structured elements and structuring elements or what he terms with the phrase "structured and structuring structure".⁹ Habitus is structured by situations experienced by a person in the past and present, such as parenting experiences and educational experiences. Habitus structures in the sense that a person's habitus contributes to shaping the practices carried out by a person now and in the future. Habitus is a structure in which there is a systematic arrangement rather than being arranged randomly and without a pattern. This "structure" consists of a system of dispositions that generate or give rise to perception, appreciation and practice.¹⁰

These tendencies continue and change in different directions, being able to become active in a wide and varied scope of social action.¹¹ Thus the habitus is formed in two directions. First, habitus is structured by the conditions of existence and second, habitus encourages practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings that are in accordance with the structure of the habitus.¹² Bourdieu summarizes these relationships into habitus and capital meeting the arena into practice.

In the equation constructed by Bourdieu mentioned above, practice is the accumulation of relations between a person's disposition (habitus) and a person's position in the arena (the strength of capital owned), in a social arena (field). The equation above has an important significance in Bourdieu's sociological theory building, that the relationship between the three dimensions of prepositions that he proposed; habitus, arena and capital.¹³ In the context of this relationship, habitus is actually the basis of

⁹Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Terj: M. Adamson. (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), 170.

¹⁰Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*. Terj: R. Nice. (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 53.

¹¹Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, Terj: R. Nice, (London: Sage Publication, 1993), 87. See also: James Albright, Deborah Hartman, Jacqueline Widin, *Bourdieu's Field Theory and the Social Sciences*, (Singapore: Springer, 2018).

¹²Anom Wiranata, *Perubahan Sosial Dalam Perspektif Pierre Bourdieu*, (Bali: Universitas Udayana, tt).

¹³Pierre Bourdieu & Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Terj: L. Wacquant, (Cambridge: Polity), 50.

the way social agents understand life, including at the same time being involved in the process of giving meaning to the arena.¹⁴

Al-Bidayah Method in Learning *Kitab Kuning*; A Populist Approach

The Al-Bidayah method in learning *kitab kuning* offers ideas related to renewing the paradigm of thinking and indigenizing the main culture of *pesantren* science in Indonesia. This method was discovered by a lecturer and founder and caretaker of the Al-Bidayah *pesantren* named Kiai Abdul Haris. This method was given the same name as the name of the *pesantren* he founded. He achieved the indigenization of this idea through offering a *nahw-sharf* learning revolution at his *pesantren* using the al-Bidayah method which he claimed could be mastered by beginners in a short time. Kiai Abdul Haris also took a populist approach, by creating an online learning channel via the *pesantren's* official YouTube channel. This claim is also a form of antithetical narrative to the old method of learning *kitab kuning*, the *bandongan* method, which usually takes a long time for students to master *kitab kuning* using this method.

In the Al-Bidayah Method there are two main ideas, namely systematization of material and maximization of students' thinking. Systematization is related to the *nahw-sharf* paradigm as a skill and not an ability. Systematization requires students to memorize fundamental theories and formulas and develop *nahw-sharf*. maximization is maximizing memorization into the ability to think logically-analytically and argumentatively.

Since its inception, the Al-Bidayah *pesantren* has emphasized that it focuses on the discourse of syntactic-morphological studies (*Nahw-Sharf*). This *pesantren*, through Kiai Abdul Haris, really provides differentiation in studies regarding these two scientific disciplines. All thoughts, conceptions, penances, academic efforts, scientific discourse and even the daily practices of *Kiai* and *santri* are directed entirely at *nahw-sharf*. Kiai Abdul Haris' idea to offer a new paradigm for the *nahw-sharf* learning approach will actually lead to a shift in our *pesantren* tradition¹⁵ because

¹⁴Pierre Bourdieu & Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*

¹⁵The world of Islamic boarding schools, according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's framework, is the traditional Islamic world. Everything about traditional Islam was passed down by Islamic civilization to the world of *pesantren* in various forms and styles. In fact - in the Indonesian context - the label "traditional" attached to *pesantren*, in several cases has massively given rise to public opinion regarding Islam which is confined within a literalist, formalist frame of mind minus modernization

this great tradition is supported, among other things, by the *nahw-sharf* scientific discipline.¹⁶

The Al-Bidayah method is called a fast method for reading *kitab kuning* for beginners. This method has been published and has been registered to obtain Intellectual Property Rights. He has written at least nine books explaining the al-Bidayah method.¹⁷ There are five separate sheet attachments in the form of a matrix containing formulas regarding *sharf* (morphological changes in Arabic words) that he compiled. The morphological matrix is also equipped with several instances with various functional sentence forms. The phonological matrix is printed colorfully with good quality laminated printing, so it is easy and interesting to learn.

The first book in the main curriculum is entitled *Teori Dasar Nahwu & Sharaf*. This book adheres to the systematic logic of material, unlike other *Nahwu-Sharf* books in general. The general posture of this book is divided into at least three main components. The first component begins with selected *nadzham* taken from the *Imrithiy* book and the *Alfiyah ibn-malik* book. The selected *nadzham* components merely total thirty-one *nadzham*. In contrast to the *Imrithiy nadzham* and *Alfiyah nadzham* which total two hundred and fifty and a thousand verses of *nadzham* and usually in *pesantren* tradition the entire *nadzham* is memorized by the students, the *nadzham* in the main book of the Al-Bidayah method is absolutely no obligation for the students to memorize it. It's just a daily habit to read the *nadzham* before the Maghrib prayer in *pesantren* prayer room.

The second main component of the book is *tadrib* or practice. This training component is interesting because it appears at the beginning before the material is even taught at all. There are six *tadrib* or exercises which are sub-chapters in the book. Even though the *tadrib* component is related to the table of *ta'wid* (habituation) which is the main component of this book, the *tadrib* component is also intended as a stimulation to enter the core material in the following chapters. The first two components in

and contextualization. Meanwhile, Higher Education is where cutting-edge issues emerge. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, (London: KPI, 1987), 15

¹⁶*Kitab kuning* book is one of the characteristic elements of *pesantren* in Indonesia. Other elements identified as always present in *pesantren* apart from *kitab kuning*, for instance, Pondok (tempat tinggal santri), masjid, santri and Kyai. Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), 44-45.

¹⁷There are seven books containing the al-bidayah method "Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Pemula", "Pelengkap Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf", "Tanya Jawab Nahwu dan Sharf", "Aplikasi I'rab", "Logika Analisa Teks Arab", "Logika Analisa Teks Arab", "Panduan Pertanyaan Nahwu&Sharf", "Ringkasan Teori Dasar Nahwu". there is also an attached sheet which contains the formulas for changing the *sharf*.

Nahwu & Sharaf's Basic Theory book mostly discuss morphological changes in words in Arabic.

The third component of material structure in the *Nahwu & Sharaf* Basic Theory book is material regarding *nahw* or syntax in Arabic. The *nahw* material merely focuses the study on two important themes, namely *fi'il* (verb) and *isim* (noun). However, the third component in this book which discusses the two important themes above is a discussion with a proportion of almost ninety percent of the total material contained in it. The themes of deep discussion as found in the baboon book discussing *nahw-sharf* such as *imrithiy* or *alfiyah* do not appear at all in a book entitled "*Teori Dasar Nahwu & Sharaf Tingkat Pemula*".¹⁸ Even though the discussion of the themes of the book merely discusses *fi'il* (verbs) and *isim* (nouns), the entire scope of Arabic language structure is included in it.

In order to accommodate the scope of discussion of *nahw-sharf* which has not been included in the main book on the Al-Bidayah method, a supplementary book or second book is provided entitled "*Pelengkap Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Lanjut*".¹⁹ This supplementary book has a book structure and posture that is almost the same as the main book, but this second book functions to complement the lack of material coverage in the first book. Apart from that, the second book is intended for advanced students who already have a theoretical foundation regarding *nahw-sharf* at the initial level through the first book above.

The two books above, entitled *Teori Dasar Nahwu & Sharaf Tingkat Pemula* and *Pelengkap Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Lanjut* are the two main books on the Al-Bidayah method, the only difference is that the first title is intended for beginners and even for those who have never heard of the term *nahw-sharf* or can't even read Arabic writing, while the second book is intended for advanced levels who have completed beginner level books.

The third book is the *Aplikasi I'rab* book.²⁰ The structure of this book is more practical than the previous two books which tended to be theoretical. This *Aplikasi I'rab* book displays Arabic text analysis packaged in the form of instances ranging from simple to complex. There are very significant differences between the first and second books and this third book. If the first and second books consist of three main components, the

¹⁸Abdul Haris, *Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Pemula*, (Jember: Pustaka Al-Bidayah, 2022).

¹⁹Abdul Haris, *Pelengkap Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Lanjut*, (Jember: Pustaka Al-Bidayah, 2022)

²⁰Abdul Haris, *Aplikasi I'rab*, (Jember: Pustaka Al-Bidayah, 2022).

third book, which is more applicable, is only composed of two main material components, that the main material regarding sentences (words in Arabic), *I'rab* (changes in the meaning of the end of sentences in Arabic), *Jumlah* (structure of words in Arabic), *Syarath* (word connection), *Al-Asma' al-Amilah 'amala Al-Fi'l* (nouns that function like verbs), *I'mal al-Mashdar* (functionalization of verbs that are objectified), *anwa' al-I'rab* (various changes in the meaning of words) and *Aqsam Al-I'rab wa alatuhu* (various signs of changes in the meaning of words in Arabic).

The second material component in the *Aplikasi I'rab* book is instances of Arabic sentences and their applied analysis. There is no theme sub-chapter that covers the theme of the Arabic sentence and its analysis so that the title of the sentence becomes the main sub-theme. This third book is a companion book to the previous two books. In order to support the authentication of word analysis in the book, Kiai Abdul Haris also includes references in the form of footnotes. He took these references from *pesantren* baboon books regarding *nahw-sharf* such as the book *al-qawaid al-asasiyah li al-lughah al-arabiyah* written by Ahmad Al-Hasyimi, *Jami' Durus Al'Arabiyah* written by Musthafa Al-Gholayaniy and other baboon books.

The fourth book written by Kiai Abdul Haris is the book "*Tanya Jawab Nahwu Sharf*". This book contains question and answer about *nahwu sharaf* accompanied by many instances of forms of grammatical analysis. If we look deeply, *Tanya Jawab Nahwu Sharf* book was prepared to stimulate students' courage to communicate with other students. The courage to communicate between students is an important asset for students from *Salaf* *pesantren* who usually do not have the courage to take the initiative to communicate. This is different from students in modern *pesantren* who are more courageous in taking the initiative to communicate. The logical basis of Al-Bidayah's method of thinking can actually be known through the book "*Tanya Jawab Nahwu Sharf*".

Scientific Disciplines from Established Traditions to New, More Discursive Traditions

In general, the Al-Bidayah method curriculum can be categorized into three main typologies where all of the three categories focus their study on *nahw-sharf*. The first category is the theoretical *nahw-sharf* category where this first category is the form of effort, he makes to ground *nahw-sharf* and withdraw the two disciplines from their fundamental elitist epistemological discourses which is merely consumed by *pesantren* public into discussions of more populist scientific disciplines so that it can be

studied easily by anyone without having to have a background attached to Islamic boarding schools.

Al-Bidayah's baboon method book "*Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Pemula*" 294 pages, "*Pelengkap Teori Dasar Nahwu dan Sharf Tingkat Lanjut*" 494 pages, "*Apliakasi I'rab*" 314 pages, "*Ringkasan Teori Dasar Ilmu Nahwu; Jembatan Ngaji Kitab Kuning Untuk Pemula*" 150 pages "*Logika Analisa Teks Arab*" 142 pages, all of which are published by Pustaka Al-Bidayah. Apart from being a methodological offer in order to leave the impasse of the existing and established *bandongan* tradition, these books also explain the epistemological building of the Al-Bidayah method to build a more populist tradition of studying *kitab kuning*.

In the context of Pierre Felix Bourdieu's cultural analysis approach,²¹ Kiai Abdul Haris's efforts are a form of antithesis to cultural reproduction. When a culture or tradition in the dynamics of its development and reproduction experiences stagnation and saturation point or in a certain context clash with modern things, the social capital of a culture will organically experience certain adjustments. Bourdieu uses a more rational way of thinking that objective structures and subjective representations, agents and actors are dialectically intertwined and influence each other reciprocally (duality).²² In the context of the social approach, any social phenomenon is a product of individual actions. Therefore, the logic of action must be sought from the rationality of the actors. Bourdieu's concept of Habitus will not accept a strict separation between social actors and the structures that surround them.

Changing social practices that have become a long tradition is not a simple attempt. This includes very complex components and is related to the sociological structures that surround it, including tradition and cultural appropriation. In pesantren, *kitab kuning* study discourse *bandongan* is an established tradition. Without an established epistemological concept, it is difficult for individuals to undertake this antithesis project.²³ Working on a project to indigenize a new approach to learning *kitab kuning* means taking an antithesis position and going against the old tradition of

²¹Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Refletive Sociology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 31.

²²Anthony Giddens, *Central Problem in Social Theory*, (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 53. Lihat juga B. Herry Priyono, *Anthony Giddens: Suatu Pengantar*, (Jakarta: KPG, 2002), 3.

²³Yuli habibatul imamah. "The Concept of Modern-Contextual Islamic Education According to Haji Rasul". *At-Ta'dib* 18 (2) 2024:71-92. <https://doi.org/10.21111/attadib.v18i2.10799>.

bandongan. Bordieu's concept of habitus will not accept a strict separation between social actors and the structures that surround them.

The second curriculum category in the book written by Kiai Abdul Haris is the practical category. This practice category is the embodiment of the theoretical level into discursive practice. Books like "*Tanya Jawab Nahwu dan Sharaf; Jembatan Ngaji Kitab Kuning Untuk Para Pemula*" 710 pages published by Pustaka Al-Bidayah, and a book entitled "*Panduan Pertanyaan Nahwu dan Sharaf; Jembatan Ngaji Kitab Kuning Untuk Para Pemula*" 110 pages published by Pustaka Al-Bidayah is Kiai Abdul Haris's effort to build a discursive tradition, instead of learning *kitab kuning* which only relies on the meaning of the teacher or *Kiai*. The third category is the text application book category. Most of the third book is in the form of texts applying the science of *Nahwu-Sharf* directly to the meaning of the book word by word. This third typology is also one of the keys to reading *kitab kuning* using the Al-Bidayah method.

Al-Bidayah Method: Desacralization of Nahwu-Sharf and Building a New Culture in Pesantren

Pesantren in the Indonesia have a long, well-established tradition.²⁴ It is built culturally by society. The establishment of a *pesantren* is a form for the distribution and transmission of the teachings and fundamental values of the Islamic religion. It cannot be denied that *pesantren* have made a major contribution to Indonesian civilization. The emergence of *pesantren* in the long historical period of the journey of educational civilization in Indonesia has made *pesantren* more adaptive to change. *pesantren* naturally make various adjustments and compromises according to the current context and conditions.²⁵

The scientific discourse built by *pesantren* in Indonesia generally centers on at least three main sciences, the science of interpretation, *Hadith*, *Fiqh* or procedures for worship in Islam. Although there are also many *pesantren* that focus their main scientific discourse activities on Sufism. The three main scientific dimensions that are usually found in *pesantren* must always be supported by competent mastery of instrumental science or the science of studying the ins and outs of the Arabic language. Primarily

²⁴M. Atho Mudzhar, "Kedudukan IAIN Sebagai Perguruan Tinggi", dalam; *Problem dan Prospek IAIN*, Ed: Komaruddin Hidayat & Hendro Prasetyo, (Jakarta: Ditbinpertaiss, 2000), 63.

²⁵Karel. A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1974), 12

syntactic (*nahwu*) and morphological (*Sharf*) aspects,²⁶ although it does not rule out the possibility of including semantics (*Ilm Ad-dilalah*) and also around lexicology (*al ma'ajim*).

Knowledge of these tools is the main prerequisite for studying scientific dimensions in *pesantren* because the tradition of learning for students in the three scientific fields of *pesantren* always uses the language of instruction in pegon letters with a word-by-word meaning model. Students who do not have mastery of the science of tools and mastery of the model of translating books using pegon letters or the meaning of *gandul* will find it difficult to follow the recitation material in *pesantren*.

In many cases in *pesantren* in Indonesia, mastering the knowledge of these tools is a huge problem for students.²⁷ At the same time, tool science is increasingly becoming the main identity and character of *pesantren* in Indonesia. *Nahw-sharf* transformed into an elite science. Mastery of this knowledge is considered important and prestigious. *Nahw-Sharf* is the main prerequisite that must be taught in *pesantren*. The requirement to teach tool of science in *pesantren* has become a kind of unwritten convention. Institutions that claim *pesantren* and do not teach these two sciences are considered to be outside *pesantren* tradition in Indonesia.

The idea of the leader of the al-Bidayah *pesantren* is to change the existing establishment and tradition of learning tools at *pesantren*. Some of the fundamental values built by the leader are that knowledge of *Nahw-Sharf* tools is not an ability, but a skill. The idea of Kiai Abdul Harris's Al-Bidayah method cannot merely be seen as an idea that simply attempts to provide an alternative to *nahw-sharf* learning. Within the framework of the deconstruction approach, this approach actually destroys the traditional *pesantren* building and at the same time it starts a project to build a more inclusive and egalitarian *pesantren* civilization. *Pesantren* is more inclusive, emphasizes logical-analytical thinking rather than just memorizing,

²⁶Some Indonesian Muslim scholars such as Nurcholish Madji consider that Nahw-Sharf is one of the factors in the decline of Islam. The ability of a santri, especially a Kyai, or Islamic preacher, in these two fields of knowledge seems to be a prerequisite ability that must be possessed. Santri, Kyai or preachers who do not have adequate skills in these two sciences are considered not authoritative. see, Nurcholish Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren*, (Jakarta: LP3ICE)

²⁷It turns out that most of the Arabic language curricula of Madrasas or *pesantren* in Indonesia are still oriented towards prescriptive rather than descriptive Arabic language learning and are less concerned with the phenomenon of the Arabic language which is currently developing rapidly with all forms of vocabulary transformation and its application. Arabic in Indonesia, in the learning context, seems to be only positioned at a prescriptive level. Learning Arabic, especially in traditional *pesantren*, is still slow and has not yet matured. Usually learning Arabic relying on memorizing *nadhzm* or song verses about summaries of Arabic rules. See Nurcholish Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren Sebuah Potret Perjalanan*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1987), 34.

provides many argumentative alternatives when discussing the meaning of words and *mufradat*/vocabulary, instead of dominating the class, it uses a facilitation approach to its students, although it still bases the students' understanding on memorize.

Al-Bidayah Method: Criticism of Kiai Authority in Learning *Kitab Kuning* in *Pesantren*

Scholars have positioned traditional Islamic education as a binary opposition to modern education.²⁸ These two patrons of education are often dichotomized.²⁹ There are contradictory world views regarding the structure and values in the two educational environments. Modern education treats education as a separate and independent activity, incompatible with the ways in which traditional Islamic education developed.³⁰

In modern education, people pay attention to grades, which indicate how well a person performs in school. In addition, the system was created with a strict level of bureaucratization. The learning system is run using a tiered model based on student age. They are expected to grow within the group and acquire skills and knowledge equally, based on the program offered. As for traditional Islamic education, students are given the option to leave or stay at the *pesantren*. In contrast, modern education requires an entrance exam, or some kind of test that will be given to those who enroll. Students are also scheduled to take a final exam for graduation.³¹

The process of learning activities can indirectly be interpreted as an attempt to challenge the tradition of authority and domination of *Kiai* which is usually guided by traditional *pesantren*. Authority and domination are often used as tools to legitimize power. The inequality between religious experts and marginalized lay people is deliberately maintained by elites, including religious elites to make lay people misrecognize and judge the arbitrariness of power in religion.

²⁸Mark Halstead, "An Islamic Concept of Education", *Comparative Education* 40 (4), 2004: 517-29.

²⁹Khuram Hussain, "An Islamic Consideration of Western Moral Education: An Exploration Of the Individual", *Journal of Moral Education* 36 (3), 2007: 297-308. Roqib, M. (2021). Increasing Social Class through Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 12(2), 305-329. Retrieved February 14, 2024, from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/219841/>.

³⁰Lihat misalnya: Pam Nilan, 'The Spirit of Education in Indonesian Pesantren', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 30 (2) 2009. Dale. F Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a twentieth-Century Notable*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 65.

³¹Helen. N Boyle, *Quranic Schools: Agents Of Preservation and Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22-23.

Religious symbols are also a tool used to package this inequality to make it appear more spiritual. According to Bourdieu, most of the institutional apparatus and discourse in religion are designed to convince the laity.³² The "play on words" (in the form of prayers, blessings and praise) that accompanies religious practice is an inseparable part of the symbolic economy of religious institutions. This play on words both practically and symbolically refines social relations and the relationship of exploitation of marginalized lay people.³³

The Al-Bidayah method has more spirit than just studying the *kitab kuning*. This approach emphasizes the importance of building egalitarian relations between *Kiai* and *santri*. If the conservative approach in learning *kitab kuning* places more emphasis on one-party relationships, then this approach prioritizes participatory and independent values and meaning as well as relationships between parties and components. In several aspects, traditional Islamic boarding schools have the goal of preserving culture just as religion also has the same goal.³⁴ Observers of the post-materialist cultural shift found traditional religious symbols losing their relevance outside their original settings.³⁵ In the context of the digital world nowadays, this is true, but in fact, this is not entirely true. Islamic Education Centers in the regions still reproduce *Kiai* or religionists along with their charisma. It is at this point that Al-Bidayah's method actually attempts to destroy this cultural reproduction.

Traditional Islamic education, including pesantren within it, has long had a history of resistance to modern things.³⁶ This rejection cannot be separated from the long history of *pesantren* as one of the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia, so that in this long historical period the *pesantren* tradition has become increasingly established.³⁷ This establishment actually makes *pesantren* appear exclusive. The novelty that comes to the

³²Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of Religious Field", *Comparative Social Research*, 13, 1-44.

³³Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 116.

³⁴Z. Bauman, *Post-Modernity and its Discontents*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 182-185. Lihat juga: M. Castells, *the Power of Identity*, (Cambridge: MA Blackwell, 1997),

³⁵Masooda Bano, *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change*, (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2018).

³⁶Z. Nur'aeni, "Daru Tauhid: Modernizing a Pesantren Tradition", *Studia Islamika*: 2005. Vol 12. No. 3.

³⁷Nurcholish Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren; Sebuah Potret Perjalanan*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1987).

traditional arena is often seen as a threat to the establishment of traditional cultural buildings in *pesantren*.³⁸

This landscape of intertwined relationships between *Kiai* authority and the maintenance of tradition as an arena for contestation between both *pesantren* and leaders will inevitably occur because in a sociological context, *Kiai* or religious leaders in Islam do not have institutionalized authorization and sometimes even tend to clash with each other for power and authority.³⁹ Some western scientists have long been concerned about the phenomenon of shifting religious authority caused by secularization⁴⁰ and technological changes.⁴¹ The phenomenon of *kiai's* authority and charisma that occurs in Islam, especially in the digital era, does not appear to have changed too much. This authority is reproduced with awareness either through institutions or through loyalist followers, usually these loyalists are lay people who consist of a weaker social class. The unique authority of *Kiai* as a distinctive *ulama* entity makes this happen.

Observers of the post-materialist cultural shift found traditional religious symbols losing their relevance outside their original setting.⁴² In the context of the increasingly massive digital world recently, this seems to be happening. Conservatism and traditionalism, which have been the background for the production of knowledge and power, have simply been destroyed by religionists and *ulama* on television and social media.⁴³ Artists who didn't even have a good religious background and understand Islamic conservatism and traditionalism suddenly had a wide following and influence due to the blow up of the media. Al-Bidayah's method actually

³⁸Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java*, (London: Springer, 2005). Lihat juga Robert Hefner, "Introduction: The Politics and Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia", In *Making Modern Muslims*, (Hawai: University of Hawai Press, 2008). Lukens-Bull, R., Woodward, M. (2021). Variation of Muslim Practice in Indonesia. In: Lukens-Bull, R., Woodward, M. (eds) *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32626-5_78

³⁹Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Plural Islam and Contestation of Religious Authority in Indonesia" dalam Noorsahril Saat, *Islam in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2018), 140-163. Lihat juga: Nurul Azizah, Joseph Okwesili Nkwede & Mohammad Armoyu | Richard Meissner (Reviewing editor) (2021) The octopus-like power of Pesantren dynasty in the dynamics of local politics, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7:1, DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2021.1962056

⁴⁰Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority", *Social Forces*, (March 1994), 749-774.

⁴¹Alberta Giorgi, "Mediatized Catholicism: Minority Voices and Religious Authority in the Digital Sphere", *Religions*, 2019, 10 (463:1-21). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10080463>

⁴²R. Inglehart, *Culture Shift and Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton: NJ Princeton University Press, 1990), 179.

⁴³Masooda Bano, *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change*, (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2018).

attempts to change this stigma. Starting from the learning and communication relations between *Kiai* and students between positions.

Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori state the phenomenon of the splitting of the *Kiai's* center of authority from traditional conservatism to the digital space as a fracture of Islamic authority in which the role of the *Kiai* is maintained by the function of the *pesantren* as a space for social and cultural reproduction..⁴⁴ Compared with Christianity, the discourse on religious authority in Islam in the digital era and the shifts that occur may be more fascinating. *Kiai* or religious leaders in Islam do not have institutionalized authority and sometimes tend to pit themselves against each other.⁴⁵ Some western scientists have long been concerned about the phenomenon of shifting religious authority in Christianity, whether caused by secularization ⁴⁶ and technological changes.⁴⁷ In contrast to the phenomenon that occurs in Islam, the authority of *Kiai* in the digital era does not appear to have changed too much.⁴⁸ The unique authority of *Kiai* as a unique ulama entity makes this happen. This, once again mentioned above, is closely related to the structure of Islamic authority which is less institutionalized and less hierarchical than the structure and hierarchy in Christianity.⁴⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The Al-Bidayah method has two main approaches. Systematization of subject and maximization of students' thinking. Systematization of subject is related to the *nahw-sharf* paradigm as a skill and not an ability. Systematization requires students to memorize fundamental theories and formulas and develop *nahw-sharf*. Maximization is maximizing memorization into the ability to think logically-analytically-argumentatively. With this model of thinking students are expected to have the initiative and confidence to debate and provide meaning options

⁴⁴Dale. F. Eickelman & J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004)

⁴⁵Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Plural Islam and Contestation of Religious Authority in Indonesia" dalam Noorsahril Saat, *Islam in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2018), 140-163.

⁴⁶Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority", *Social Forces*, (March, 1994), 749-774.

⁴⁷Alberta Giorgi, "Mediatized Catholicism: Minority Voices and Religious Authority in the Digital Sphere", *Religions*, 2019, 10 (463:1-21). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10080463>

⁴⁸Afendi, Arief Hidayat, Ratna Endang Widuatie, Titih Nursugiharti, Agus Yulianto, and Al-Amin Al-Amin. 2024. "Reviving the Legacy of KH Hasyim Asy'ari: Embracing Techno-Islamic Pedagogy for Contemporary Education". *At-Ta'dib* 19 (1):1-16. <https://doi.org/10.21111/attadib.v19i1.12247>.

⁴⁹Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority" *Social Forces*.

with different perspectives when the *kitab kuning* learning process is carried out. This endeavour is also a step to build *Kiai-santri* relations so that the relationship between the two agents is no longer based on social class and capital, but a relationship that is interpositional, inclusive and egalitarian.

The learning approach via the official YouTube channel of the Al-Bidayah method carried out by the inventor of the Al-Bidayah method and the leader of the Al-Bidayah *pesantren* is a form of fracture of Islamic authority where the center of *Kiai* authority is split from traditional conservatism to the digital space but at the same time the *Kiai's* role is maintained through *pesantren* as a space for social and cultural reproduction of the spread of Islam that has been established.

Within the framework of the critique of habitus-arena and agent-structure social reproduction, the Al-Bidayah method enters the arena of contestation over the *kitab kuning* learning method in *pesantren* and provides a new alternative amidst the dominance of the *bandongan* method which has become an established tradition of *kitab kuning* learning in *pesantren*. The Al-Bidayah method also offers a reconciliative spirit to overcome the dead end of rigid social relations between *Kiai, santri* and the community which is the arena for *Kiai's* preaching. This criticism of social reproduction is important to overcome the inequality between religious experts and marginalized lay people, which is deliberately maintained by elites, including religious elites, to make lay people misrecognize and judge the arbitrariness of power in religion.

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